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ATTORNEY GENERAL BRUNING WARNS CONSUMERS TO ASK QUESTIONS WHEN GIVING TO CHARITIES

(Lincoln) Nebraska Attorney General Jon Bruning is warning consumers to be cautious when they receive charitable solicitations. Legitimate law enforcement agencies are currently conducting telemarketing campaigns in Nebraska, but a questionable organization is also taking advantage of Nebraskans' desire to help law enforcement.

"Most Nebraskans have limited resources when it comes to charitable giving. Their hard earned money should go to local law enforcement throughout the state, not to the fund-raisers," said Attorney General Jon Bruning.

The "American Deputy Sheriffs' Association" is a non-profit corporation headquartered in Louisiana that asks for donations by telling people that the money will help Nebraska law enforcement agencies with things like bullet-proof vests and benefits to families of officers killed in duty. The callers use high-pressure, deceptive phone solicitations to make Nebraskans believe that the caller is a local law enforcement person, and that donations are put to good use in the community of the Nebraskan being called.

In reality, the callers are paid professional fund-raisers. 89% of the donations are paid to the professional fund-raisers, and only 4% of the donations are actually spent on program services.

The legitimate law enforcement agencies currently conducting telemarketing campaigns are the Nebraska Lodge of the Fraternal Order of Police, the Nebraska Sheriff's Association, the State Troopers Association, and the Police Officers Association of Nebraska.

When a Consumer receives a charitable solicitation, they should ask questions before donating. Good questions to ask are:

- What is the specific purpose of the organization?
- Exactly what kinds of programs and services will my donation go toward?
- Does the group provide services in Nebraska or the local community? If it is a police or firefighter group, does any of the money benefit local departments? What local departments receive the money and how much do they receive?
- What percentage of my contribution goes toward salaries or other administrative costs?
- Are you a paid solicitor or a volunteer? Are you paid a salary or a commission?
- Does the organization have a detailed financial report? Is there additional available written information about the group? (Ask for copies before donating).
- Is my donation tax deductible? (Ask for a copy of the charity's exemption letter, or call the Internal Revenue Service at 1-800-829-1040 to check if the group is exempt).

Don't be pressured into making an immediate decision. If you don't personally know the charity, insist on written material before making a decision to donate. For additional information on consumer protection, visit the Attorney General's Web site at www.ago.state.ne.us or call (800) 727-6432.

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